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(54) Title: ADVERTISING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR DIGITAL VIDEO STREAMS

(57) Abstract

A system for managing advertisements in a digital video environment, including methods for selecting suitable advertising based on subscriber profiles, and substituting advertisements in a program stream. The Ad management System (100) of the present invention manages the sales and insertion of digital video ads in cable tv, switched digital video and streaming internet based environments.

TITLE

Advertising Management System for Digital Video Streams

Background of the Invention

5   Advertising forms an important part of broadcast
programming including broadcast video (television), radio
and printed media. The revenues generated from advertisers
subsidize and in some cases pay entirely for programming
received by subscribers. For example, over the air
10   broadcast programming (non-cable television) is provided
entirely free to viewers and is essentially paid for by the
advertisements placed in the shows that are watched. Even
in cable television systems and satellite-based systems, the
revenues from advertisements subsidize the cost of the
15   programming, and were it not for advertisements, the monthly
subscription rates for cable television would be many times
higher than at present. Radio similarly offers free
programming based on payments for advertising. The low cost
of newspapers and magazines is based on the subsidization of
20   the cost of reporting, printing and distribution from the
advertising revenues.

Techniques for inserting pre-recorded spot messages
into broadcast transmission have been known. Generally,
broadcast video sources (i.e., TV networks, special interest
25   channels, etc.) schedule their air time with two types of
information: "programming" for the purpose of informing or
entertaining, and "avails" for the purpose of advertising.
The avails may occupy roughly 20-25% of the total
transmitting time, and are usually divided into smaller
30   intervals of 15, 30, or 60 seconds.

In many prior art systems, the insertion of
advertisements in avails is handled by a combination of cue-
tone detectors, switching equipment and tape players which

hold the advertising material. Upon receipt of the cue
tones, an insertion controller automatically turns on a tape
player containing the advertisement. Switching equipment
then switches the system output from the video and audio
5   signals received from the programming source to the output
of the tape player. The tape player remains on for the
duration of the advertising, after which the insertion
controller causes the switching equipment to switch back to
the video and audio channels of the programming source.
10   When switched, these successive program and advertising
segments usually feed to a radio-frequency (RF) modulator
for delivery to the subscribers.

       Many subscriber television systems, such as cable
television are currently being converted to digital
15   equipment. These new digital systems compress the
advertising data, e.g., using Motion Picture Experts Group 2
(MPEG 2) compression, store the compression data as a
digital file on a large disk drive (or several drives), and
then, upon receipt of the cue tone, spool ("play") the file
20   off of the drive to a decompressor. The video and
accompanying audio data are decompressed back to a standard
video and audio, and switched into the video/audio feed of
the RF modulator for delivery to the subscriber.

       A prior art (present model) of providing advertisements
25   along with actual programming is based on linked
sponsorship. In the linked sponsorship model, the
advertisements are inserted into the actual programming
based on the demographic information related to the
viewers/subscribers. However, the ability to transmit
30   information digitally allows programming and advertisements
to be transported from various geographic locations and
arranged in a fashion which permits an optimized program to
be presented to a subscriber.

The transition to the digital age permits a migration to new methods of advertising based on what is termed orthogonal sponsorship. In orthogonal sponsorship, the advertisements are targeted at subscribers based on a

5   determination that the advertisement will be of interest to the subscriber and that the subscriber is likely to ultimately purchase the product or service being advertised.

The digital systems are capable of handling both linked sponsorship, orthogonal sponsorship and a combination of

10   both. However, what is required is a method and apparatus for identifying advertising opportunities, presenting those opportunities to advertisers, receiving information about the advertisements, determining the ability to insert the advertisements, inserting the advertisements, and returning

15   to the program in the digital video arena.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention is a method and apparatus for managing advertisements in a digital environment, including

20   methods for selecting suitable advertising based on subscriber profiles, and inserting targeted (selected) advertisements in the program streams or substituting existing advertisements in a program stream with targeted advertisements.

25   The Ad Management System (AMS) of the present invention manages the sales and insertion of digital video advertisements (hereinafter "ads") in cable television, switched digital video, and streaming video (Internet) based environments. The AMS provides advertisers an ability to

30   describe their advertisements in terms of target market demographics, required ad bandwidth, ad duration, and other ad specific parameters.

The AMS receives the ad descriptions that include some
or all of the aforementioned parameters, and matches the ads
to the advertising opportunities ("avails") available in the
programming stream. The AMS tracks different avails
5   including duration and bandwidth of the avail, and uses a
number of schemes to determine if the ad can be placed in
the avail. In one embodiment, the ads are received in a
high resolution state with minimum compression, and are
compressed to a predetermined bandwidth.

10   One of the key functions of the AMS is its ability to
allow ads to be matched to groups of subscribers (e.g. nodes
in cable television environments) or to individual
subscribers in the switched digital video or streaming video
environments. The service is provided at no cost to the
15   subscriber/consumer, however, the economic efficiencies are
created and may be used to provide a revenue stream to the
cable operator, profiler and ad service operator.

Another key aspect of the present invention is one or
more privacy features wherein the raw consumer/subscriber
20   data is maintained private on a Secured Correlation Server
(SCS). The raw consumer/subscriber data is not available for
sale or is not accessible by third parties. Thus, the AMS
forms part of a matching service, in which advertisers work
in conjunction with subscribers, profilers (video surfstream
25   profilers, Internet profilers, and retail outlets), and
network operators to allow subscribers to receive more
targeted ads while protecting the privacy of the
subscribers. The network operator may be a cable, Digital
Subscriber Line(DSL), or satellite network operator.
30   Subscribers receive the benefits of being able to have
advertisements which are more targeted to their lifestyle in
addition to receiving discounts from retailers and service
providers.

Furthermore, a plurality of different methods may be used for inserting targeted advertisements in the actual program streams (digital video streams). In one embodiment, a method of synchronous ad insertion is presented in which

5   ads are simultaneously placed in a digital video stream. The synchronous insertion method may be implemented using constant bit rate (CBR) or available bit rate (ABR) techniques. A plesiochronous method may also be used in which ads are inserted within a timing window. CBR or ABR

10 techniques may also be used in the plesiochronous ad insertion method. Alternatively, an asynchronous ad insertion method may be used in which ads are asynchronously inserted in the video streams.

For the transport of advertisements, an in-band channel

15 may be used. The in-band channel delivers the advertisements in real-time at the moment of insertion, and the ads are not pre-stored in any storage medium. Alternatively, the advertisements may be transported via an out-of-band channel and may be stored in a storage medium

20 for subsequent insertion into the program streams.

The present invention may also be used to monitor the program bandwidth and determine if an ad may be placed in that bandwidth. Generally, the ads are received in a high resolution state with minimum compression, and are

25 compressed to a predetermined bandwidth at the time of insertion.

These and other features and objects of the invention will be more fully understood from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments which should be

30 read in light of the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and form a part of the specification, illustrate the embodiments of the present invention and, together with the
5   description serve to explain the principles of the invention.

In the drawings:

FIG. 1 illustrates an advertisement management system (AMS) in accordance with the one embodiment of the present
10 invention;

FIGS. 2A and 2B illustrate exemplary use of public information based on median home prices or starter home prices;

FIG. 3 illustrates an exemplary tax assessment data
15 that can be used for determining the applicability of an advertisement;

FIGS. 4A - 4D illustrate exemplary graphical representation of ad characterization vectors;

FIG. 5 illustrates an exemplary case of demographic
20 correlation;

FIG. 6 illustrates an exemplary case of utilizing avail opportunities in conjunction with correlation data to match the advertisements;

FIG. 7 illustrates a bar graph indicator utilized for
25 correlating advertisements and subscribers;

FIG. 8 illustrates an exemplary pricing scheme;

FIG. 9 illustrates a functional diagram of the avail sales/auctioning module;

FIG. 10 illustrates a statistically multiplexed stream
30 in which ads are inserted synchronously at a constant bit rate (CBR);

FIG. 11 illustrates a statistically multiplexed stream in which ads are inserted in a plesiochronous manner;

FIG. 12 illustrates a statistically multiplexed stream in which ads are synchronously inserted at an available bit
5   rate (ABR);

FIG. 13 illustrates a statistically multiplexed stream in which ads are asynchronously inserted at an ABR; and

FIG. 14 illustrates an exemplary method of dynamic ad linking.

10

Detailed Description
of the Preferred Embodiment

In describing a preferred embodiment of the invention illustrated in the drawings, specific terminology will be
15 used for the sake of clarity. However, the invention is not intended to be limited to the specific terms so selected, and it is to be understood that each specific term includes all technical equivalents which operate in a similar manner to accomplish a similar purpose.

20 With reference to the drawings, in general, and FIGS. 1 through 14 in particular, the method and system of the present invention is disclosed.

Generally, an advertisement management system (AMS) in accordance with the principles of the present invention
25 consists of one or more subsystems which allow for the characterization of the advertisement, determination of advertising opportunities (avails), characterization of the subscriber, correlation of the advertisement with a subscriber or group of subscribers, and sale of the
30 advertisement, either through a traditional placement (sale), an Internet based sale, or an Internet based auction.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, the AMS 100 comprises an ad characterization module 102, an avail opportunities module 104, a subscriber characterization module 108, a correlation module 110, and an avail sales/auctioning module 112. The

5 AMS 100 is also configured to communicate to an ad insertion module 114. Note that ad insertion module 114 may be located within the AMS 100 or may be located externally.

The ad characterization module 102 allows one or more advertisers to enter key characterization data regarding the

10 advertisement and the target market. The avail opportunities module 104 allows the content providers/producers of program streams to indicate various avails that are available in the programming stream, their basic characteristics, and the extent to which they can be

15 substituted. The subscriber characterization module 108 allows for the collection of subscriber data. The subscriber data can be collected from a variety of sources including private databases external to the system or public databases that contain information relevant to the

20 subscriber.

With respect to private data, the subscriber has generally paid for the access to this data, e.g., the subscriber may receive product promotions or other offers. The subscriber is also provided access to his private data.

25 The subscriber may access the private data to assure the integrity of the data, e.g., the data accurately reflects his interests and lifestyle.

The subscriber data may be based on an individual subscriber, a group of subscribers, a household or a group

30 of households. Techniques evolving the coarse discrimination of subscribers and grouping of subscribers into large groups can be used to associate a serving area with a particular advertisement. For example, in a cable television system, it may be determined that a group of

subscribers associated with a particular optical
distribution node speak a particular language. This
knowledge may then be used to direct a particular set of
advertisements to that node. As an example, a node
5   associated with Spanish-speaking individuals can have
advertisements in Spanish inserted in the programming
streams.

The specific targeting can also be based on public
information such has median home prices or starter home
10   prices. These prices can be further associated with zip
codes, as shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B. The publicly available
data may be subscriber specific. FIG. 3 illustrates an
example of tax assessment data that can be used as a factor
in determining the applicability of an advertisement. In
15   the case of tax assessment data, the subscriber's name,
address and tax parcel number are known along with an
assessed value of the property. The assessed value of the
property can be used to determine an approximate income
range for the family and thus specifically target
20   advertisements.

Publicly available data is not restricted to real
estate data, as illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3, but can
include a variety of demographic data including median
household age, household income, race and other
25   characteristics which can be determined on a group or
individual level.

Private data can also be amassed and can include
specific viewing habits or purchase records of the
subscriber. Alternatively, the subscriber may complete
30   questionnaires and forms that indicate lifestyle, product
preference and previous purchases. All the available
private and public information is used by the subscriber
characterization module 108 for characterizing one or more
subscribers. The subscriber characteristics may be based

upon some known features. For example, it is known that the Nielsen data tracks the number of households watching particular TV programming. In accordance with the principles of the present invention, such information may be
5 used to characterize one or more characteristics of the subscribers.

The ad characterization module 102 has an advertiser interface, e.g., a Web (browser) interface, that allows advertisers to enter parameters which characterize their
10 advertisement and are used to form ad characterization vectors. The advertisers may manually create ad characterization vectors by entering useful information via the browser interface. In this case, the ad characterization vector contains a simple deterministic value (0 or 1) for
15 each category. Alternatively, the vectors may contain probabilistic distributions and may allow advertisers to develop more complex models for the target market. The principles of the present invention are flexible and may operate with either, simple deterministic values or with
20 complex models. Furthermore, heuristic rules may be defined for generating ad characterization vectors. These heuristic rules are logical rules or conditional probabilities that aid in the formation of ad characterization vectors. The heuristic rules in logic form allow the system to apply
25 generalizations that have been learned from external studies. In the case of conditional probabilities, determinations are based on statistical probabilities that define ad characterization vectors.

Furthermore, the ad characterization module 102
30 supports entry of the one or more parameters that are used by advertisers to target the advertisement and create advertisement vectors. The choices for these parameters may be presented as pull down selections in a browser utilizing a graphical user interface. In an exemplary case, the
35 following categories may be used:

Advertisement duration: 10s; 15s; 30s; 60s

Minimum advertisement bandwidth: 2 Mb/s, 4Mb/s, 6Mb/s,
8Mb/s, 10Mb/s

Household Income: <$30K, $31K-$50K, $51K-75K, $76K-$100K,
5 >$100K, no preference

Household size: 1, 2, 3-4, 4-6, >6, no preference

Median household age: <25, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, >56, no
preference

Ethnic group: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian-
10 Pacific, no preference

In one implementation, "no preference" selection is
chosen, and equal weighting is given to each category of the
particular demographic parameter. As an example, no
preference is given to household income, therefore all
15 categories of household income are assigned a value of 0.2
(1 divided by the number of categories, which in this case
is 5). After weights have been assigned to all the
categories, one or more ad characterization vectors may be
generated based on weighted categories. These ad
20 characterization vectors assist in characterization of
various advertisements. An exemplary graphical
representation of these vectors is presented in FIGS. 4A-4D.
Other categories based on demographic factors, socio-
economic factors, and consumption factors (purchase
25 information) may also be used.

The avail opportunities module 104 permits an operator or
a video programming manager an ability to list and organize the
particular avails in a programming stream. The avail
opportunities module 104 comprises an interface that may be
30 used for manual entry of data, or may be used for collection of
avail data from network or other content related databases.
The avail data includes transmission specifics, such as
duration, broadcast time, etc. The avail data also includes

demographic data pertaining to the audience viewing the program having the avail, such as household income, ethnic group, etc. The avail data may be used for formation of one or more avail characterization vectors. These avail characterization vectors

5   are correlated with the ad characterization vectors to determine how avails should be correlated with the ads. The result of this correlation (avail correlation) is an enhanced measurement of how well the correlation exists between an ad and an avail. One or more heuristic rules may be defined for

10   the generation avail characterization vectors. These heuristic rules may be expressed in terms of logical rules as well as conditional probabilities.

In an exemplary case, avail opportunities module 104 may have a graphical user interface (GUI) and the operator

15   may be presented with the following menus to assist in generation of the avail information:

Programming opportunity: fill-in line regarding the programming in which the avail is located (e.g. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* or *Monday Night Football*)

20   Avail duration: the exact time duration of the avail (e.g. 30s)

Initial bandwidth: the minimum bandwidth which is given to the avail, and to which the initial advertisement is maximally compressed. As an example, if an advertisement is

25   initially placed in a program stream which is compressed to 6 Mb/s, the initial bandwidth of the avail is 6 Mb/s.

Initial scheduled broadcast time: the initial date/time (Universal Standard Time, UST) at which the avail will appear.

30   Local preemption authorized: this checkbox indicates if an avail can be substituted at the local level or if such substitution is prohibited.

Household Income: <$30K, $31K-$50K, $51K-75K, $76K-$100K,
>$100K, not designated.

Household size: 1, 2, 3-4, 4-6, >6, not designated

Median household age: <25, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, >56, not

5 designated.

Ethnic group: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian-
Pacific, not designated

     The subscriber characterization module 108 provides the
operator the ability to characterize the subscriber in

10 Switched Digital Video (SDV) mode or in non-SDV mode. In a
non-SDV mode, the operator is presented with a node
demographics interface that allows the operator to manually
program the node characteristics using pull-down menus, or
to import the data from a file. The node characteristics

15 are determined from information manually collected by the
operator, or assembled using agents that collect the
information from publicly available sources.

     In the non-SDV mode, the node demographics interface
presents both an input screen and a node characteristics

20 screen, wherein the node characteristics screen further
includes a graphical representation of the node
demographics. Generally, a browser-based interface allows
the operator to analyze the input characteristics, and to
characterize the node. The characteristics that are input

25 and displayed include the following:

Household Income: <$30K, $31K-$50K, $51K-75K, $76K-$100K,
>$100K

Household size: 1, 2, 3-4, 4-6, >6

Median household age: <25, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, >56

30 Ethnic group: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian-
Pacific

The browser-based interface also permits the subscriber characterization module 108 to fill in probabilistic values for each of the parameters. A pull down menu may be utilized with increments of 0.1, and a normalization error

5   message may be generated if the operator generates a series of values which when summed exceed one. If the operator enters values that do not sum to 1.0, another normalization error message may be generated and displayed. As an example, if the operator characterizes the node as having

10 equal probability of the household income being in any one of the ranges shown above, the value that must be entered in each category is 0.2.

In an SDV mode, the operator is presented with a subscriber information interface. By utilizing this

15 interface, the system is capable of retrieving (based on a unique subscriber ID) demographic and product preference characteristics for each subscriber/household. Generally, to protect privacy, the subscriber private information is not used in the subscriber ID, therefore the subscriber is

20 not identifiable by the ID. The demographic and product preference characteristics may be stored locally or may be stored in one or more network databases configured to directly communicate with the AMS 100.

In an exemplary case, information for a limited number

25 of subscribers may be stored and may be retrievable and displayable on the interface. The principal characteristics of the displayed subscriber information include:

Household Income: <$30K, $31K-$50K, $51K-75K, $76K-$100K, >$100K

30 Household size: 1, 2, 3-4, 4-6, >6

Median household age: <25, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, >56

Ethnic group: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific

The subscriber characteristics may be determined in a plurality of ways including by utilizing previously described public and private data. These characteristics may also be determined based on probabilistic measures in an

5 external surfstream characterization module (not shown). The surfstream characterization module monitors the subscriber viewing habits and determines subscriber preference by utilizing one or more pre-determined heuristic rules.

10 The correlation module 110 correlates the ad characterization information with the subscriber/node characterization information to produce a demographic correlation, and also correlates the ad characterization information with the avail characterization to produce an

15 avail correlation. The correlation values may be calculated for each ad characterization vector and the corresponding subscriber/node characterization vector, as well as for each ad characterization vector and the avail characterization. In one implementation, the correlations are generated by

20 multiplying corresponding elements of the vector and summing the result (dot product). Different correlation values are normalized such that the resulting correlation value is normalized to 1, with a value of 1 indicating that the maximum correlation has been obtained.

25 An exemplary case of a demographic correlation is illustrated in FIG. 5. The calculation for the avail correlation may be performed similarly. The average value (sum of correlations divided by 2) of the demographic and avail correlations may be calculated to produce an average

30 correlation which is simply known as the "combined correlation". An impact value may also be calculated which is generally equal to the number of subscribers (estimated viewership) multiplied by the combined correlation value.

The avail sales/auctioning module 112 utilizes
information regarding the avail opportunities in conjunction
with the results of the correlation to match advertisements
with avails and to complete the transaction. Generally, the
5   avail sales/auctioning module 112 collects information about
all avails matching the basic time duration and bandwidth
characteristics, along with the program they are presently
linked to, and the combined correlation between the
advertisement and the avail listed. FIG. 6 illustrates such
10   information in a tabular form.

Based on the collected information, the avail
sales/auctioning module 112 displays, in a graphical
representation, correlations between a proposed
advertisement and the various subscribers. FIG. 7
15   illustrates this information as a bar graph and numeric
indicator.

The avail sales/auctioning module 112 also calculates
the placement of the advertisements based on the degree of
correlation and a pricing scheme as described below. An
20   exemplary case is illustrated in FIG. 8. In this example, a
simple pricing scheme is utilized in which the price for
placement of the advertisement depends linearly on the
correlation. Also, the degree of correlation may be used to
offer discounts on the pricing. Higher correlation means
25   lower discounts to the advertisers, e.g., a correlation of
0.9 results in a 0% discount, and a correlation of .2
results in a 30% discount of the listed price.

The pricing scheme may further be utilized for the sale
of avails by ranking the correlations of the avails and the
30   ads in decreasing order as a function of the degree of
correlation. When multiple ads are used with an avail, the
ad with the highest correlation (and its corresponding
price) is selected for placement in the avail. If multiple
ads indicate the same degree of correlation, the first ad in

the list is selected for placement in the avail.
Furthermore, the revenues may be optimized by announcing
avails to more than one advertiser, or by auctioning
available avails to various advertisers or ad sources.

5   FIG. 9 illustrates an exemplary case wherein the avail
sales/auctioning module 112 announces the avail
opportunities to various advertisers and ad sources. This
announcement may be made via the Internet. Advertisers/ad
sources receive the announcement and respond with one or
10   more ad characteristics that include information regarding
the product/service advertised, target market
characteristics, target programs, duration of the
advertisement, and minimum bandwidth required to transmit
the advertisement.

15   Based on the received ad characteristics, the AMS 100
determines the characteristics of available slots, including
an estimated or exact number of viewers. The AMS 100 may
report a real time report on the viewing audience (i.e., the
number of viewers at that time). In cable networks, the
20   number of active viewers can be reported back to the AMS 100
(in real time) by the use of a return path data modem in the
settop. In a switched digital video system, such as those
based on Digital Subscriber Line (xDSL), Fiber-To-The-Curb
(FTTC), and Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) transmission
25   technologies, the selection of the video programming occurs
at the central office, and it is possible for the system to
determine the number of active viewers of a program at any
given moment.

In an alternative implementation, the exact number of
30   viewers are not determined and statistical information such
as Neilsen data is reported to the advertisers. The
statistical data can be updated relatively frequently, such
that the reports received by the advertisers are based on

monthly, weekly, or even daily determinations of the approximate number of viewers of a program.

Once information regarding the advertising opportunities has been transmitted to the advertisers/ad

5   sources, the advertisers/ad sources may submit appropriate bid/bids for the advertisement. The avail sales/auctioning module 112 receives the bids, and after evaluation either accepts the bids or declines the bids. Multiple rounds of bidding may be utilized to insure that the highest price for

10 the advertisement is received by the AMS 100.

Once the bidding process is complete, the avail sales/auctioning module 112 transmits an acceptance notification to the requesting advertiser/ad source. The advertiser/ad source then transmits the actual contents of

15 the advertisement. The contents are then placed in a suitable format and sent to the ad insertion module 114 for insertion into the actual program streams (set of program signals). These program streams may be Internet web traffic or television programming.

20   The advertisements may be transported over an in-band advertising channel or over an out-of-band advertisement channel. At the ad insertion module 114, the ads may be multiplexed in one or more program streams synchronously, plesiochronously, or asynchronously. In either case, a

25 dynamic linking process is used to insert the advertisements in the program streams.

FIG. 10 illustrates a method of synchronous insertion of ads into program streams. As shown in FIG. 10, the program streams may be multiplexed into one or more

30 channels. Many different methods or standards may be used to perform multiplex operations. One such standard is the motion pictures expert group (MPEG) standard for digital video programming. The MPEG standard permits the use of statistical multiplexing to multiplex digital signals into a

single channel (multiplexed stream) wherein the bandwidth
allocated to each of the individual program varies over
time. This is illustrated in FIG. 10 wherein several of the
digital program streams, labeled as programs 2, 3, 4, 5, and
5   6, are allocated bandwidth within the multiplexed stream
which varies over time. This feature of the MPEG standard
allows bandwidth to be allocated according to the
requirements of the program contents, e.g., the programming
which has more motion or changes in scenery is allocated
10 substantially more bandwidth within the multiplexed stream
than the programming with passive scenes, e.g., a talk show.

There exists similar other digital video streaming
techniques that utilize statistical multiplexing and permit
the amount of bandwidth allocated to a program stream to be
15 varied. These techniques are not limited to video, but can
be equally applied to digital audio and multimedia. These
schemes generally include Transmission Control
Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) protocols and
applications such as those produced by Progressive Networks
20 and sold under the trademarks REAL AUDIO and REAL VIDEO,
which is presently used to transmit broadcast and recorded
audio and video across the Internet.

As shown in FIG. 10, multiple program streams are
interrupted for the presentation of one or more
25 advertisements. In FIG. 10, the advertisements are
represented by the designations AD1, AD2, AD3... AD7. When
used herein the term advertisement refers to a singular
advertisement or a sequence of advertisements to be inserted
into a program stream.

30   The method illustrated is a synchronous constant bit
rate (CBR) ad insertion. In this method, each advertisement
to be inserted has an equal bandwidth and a sync signal is
used to indicate the appropriate point for insertion of each
advertisement. Each program stream is simultaneously

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interrupted and the bit rate of each program stream is set
to a bit rate appropriate for the advertisements. Thus, it
is necessary for the program stream to adapt its bandwidth
at the time of the ad insertion. In addition, each of the
5   program segments within the program (e.g., advertising
breaks) must be of the same length. For example, if MPEG
multiplexers are used, these multiplexers must be able to
accommodate the rapid changes in bandwidth allocations to
allow insertion of all advertisements.

10   FIG. 11 illustrates a method of plesiochronous
insertion of advertisements in the program streams. In this
method, the program streams are interrupted and the
bandwidth of each program stream is changed to a constant
bit rate before the actual insertion of the advertisements.
15 In the plesiochronous method, the advertisements are not
completely synchronized and are inserted within a
predetermined window (period of time). The plesiochronous
insertion method does not require the program segments to be
of equal lengths, however, the program segments should be of
20 similar lengths.

        Both synchronous and plesiochronous ad insertion
methods may be adapted to use the available bit rate (ABR)
technique. When used herein, the term available bit rate
refers to the transmission of an advertisement at a bit rate
25 which is compatible with an existing program stream.

        In the synchronous available bit rate (ABR) method, the
process of ad insertion is synchronized, but the bandwidths
of the program streams are not adjusted for the
advertisements. Instead, the advertising material is
30 compressed to a level identical to that of the programming.
FIG. 12 illustrates the insertion of advertisements using
the ABR technique. As shown in FIG. 12, a synchronization
signal is generally used to synchronize the program streams

and select a synchronized time for the insertion of the
advertisements.

   FIG. 13 illustrates an asynchronous ad insertion method
wherein the ads are inserted at a time appropriately
5 selected rather than at a synchronized time. The advantage
of this technique is that the program segments and the
insertion time can be created according to the producer's
desires or according to a variety of pre-determined
production parameters. For example, the producers of a
10 program stream may determine suitable points within the
program contents for ad insertions and forward the
information on these points to the ad insertion systems.

   The asynchronous ad insertion method may be used either
with the ABR technique or with the CBR technique. For
15 exemplary purposes, FIG. 13 illustrates a case of
asynchronous ad insertion method based on the use of an ABR
technique. In this exemplary case, the bandwidth of the
advertisements is made equal to that of the actual
programming before the actual insertion.

20   FIG. 14 illustrates the method of dynamic ad linking.
In dynamic ad linking, one or more advertisements from an ad
stream not initially associated with a program stream can be
inserted into that program stream for viewing by the
subscriber. As illustrated in FIG. 14, six different
25 program streams are multiplexed together, and the
advertisements (AD1-AD12) are carried on a separate channel.
In the dynamic linking process, the advertisements are not
pre-assigned to any program streams and are instead
dynamically linked based on the correlation results. For
30 example, program stream 1 can have AD3 inserted into the
stream in real-time and be viewed by the subscriber.
Similarly, program stream 2 may have ad AD7 dynamically
associated with the program stream. The remaining of the
program streams may be assigned either of the

advertisements. The advantage of the dynamic linking
technique is that ads contained with a multiplexed stream
can be selected and directed to a viewer. Advertisements are
no longer limited to the ads initially associated with
5 program stream.

The dynamic linking may be employed in a cable
television system in which a number of programs are
multiplexed into a 27 Mbps data stream. The advertisements
may be dynamically linked to the program streams simply by
10 re-addressing one or more identifiers associated with the
advertisements at the time of synchronous ad insertion. For
synchronous systems, dynamic linking at the commencement of
the advertisement occurs when an ad to be selected from the
program stream is inserted into another program stream. As
15 an example, a viewer of program 1 can have an ad from ad
stream AD7 directed at the time of commencement of the
advertisement.

Although the dynamic linking method has been described
with respect to a cable television system and the
20 multiplexed stream within a 6 MHz channel, its use is not
limited to cable systems but can be equally applied to other
broadcast systems or switched digital systems which transmit
two or more programs.

Once the ad has been inserted in a program stream by ad
25 insertion module 114, the ad is transmitted to the
subscriber along with the actual program stream for viewing.
Once the advertisement has been transmitted, the associated
charges are billed to the advertiser that in turn submits a
payment. A billing module (not shown) may be added to
30 handle the charges and the payments. In one embodiment, the
charges and payment are transmitted electronically over the
Internet. In an alternate embodiment, traditional methods
of notification and payment (e.g. notification of charges
via invoices and payment via check) may be used.

In a preferred embodiment, the AMS 100 is implemented
on server based technology. As an example, processors
provided by Intel under the trademark PENTIUM can be used in
a single processor or multiple processor configuration. The
5 operating system offered by Microsoft Corporation under the
trademark WINDOWS NT SERVER can be used as the basis for the
platform. The AMS can be realized in a software means in a
number of programming languages including but not limited to
Java, C, and C++. In one embodiment the portions of the
10 system which interface to the Internet are based on Java and
Java scripts. The communications with advertisers can take
place by executing one or more Java scripts which exchange
information between the AMS and the advertisers. The
operations of the unit may also be realized in C language.

15   At the subscriber side, the programming and the target
advertisements are received by a television, television set-
top, or personal computer that decodes the multiplexed video
programming, and displays it on a television or a monitor.
The set-top can be based on a cable receiver including a
20 microprocessor, and an MPEG video decompression device.

The program and ad signals are generally transported to
the subscriber over a variety of transmission systems
including cable, satellite, wireless, xDSL, FTTC or FTTH
networks. At the subscriber side of the transmission
25 system, the set-top or personal computer contains hardware
for the reception of signals from the network and can
include multiple tuners for receiving video programming
along with advertisements, as well as one or more
microprocessors and associated random access memory (RAM)
30 which can be used for storage of ads or video programming as
required by the dynamic linking ad insertion techniques.
The information required to associate the ad with the
programming can be transmitted from the ad manager over the
same channel used to transmit the video. In one
35 implementation, the MPEG standard allows for the transport

of data, however, it is envisioned that alternate techniques
are available to transmit data to the set-top.

A number of other implementation techniques may be used
to perform the dynamic advertisement linking, including
5   substitution of a program identifier or other identifier
into the advertisement which is to be viewed, and replacing
the packets containing the original advertisements with the
substituted advertisement. Suitable identifiers include
Virtual Path Identifier/Virtual Channel Identifier (VPI/VCI)
10   identifiers, MPEG program IDs, or TCP/IP addresses. Methods
of substituting the identifiers and multiplexing in the
substitute packets containing the advertisements are well
known to those skilled in the art.

Furthermore, an interface may be developed with
15   different system operators or content providers that may
provide descriptions of the avails including date/time of
showing, program, and minimum bandwidth requirements. An
additional module termed Subscriber/Consumer Authorization
Module (not shown) indicating that a subscriber has enrolled
20   for the privacy features may be added. The
subscriber/consumer authorization module is compatible with
generally known billing systems to allow for the export of
discount information to the billing system. The
subscriber/consumer authorization module is capable of
25   exporting records to other database systems (e.g. retail
store databases) indicating the discounts consumers are
eligible for based on their use of the present system.

The AMS 100 may also be configured to have the ability
to receive surfstream profiles from a Switched Digital
30   System. These surfstream profiles will be in the form of
subscriber/household characterization vectors that are
identified with a unique subscriber ID. In order to protect
privacy, no surfstream data is passed from the SDV system to
the AMS 100.

The system may also be configured to have the ability
to utilize actual viewership information. In SDV systems,
this information is readily available from the switching
system (Broadband Digital Terminal) which is typically
5   located in the telephone central office, but which may also
be located in the field. In traditional cable systems, the
viewership information may be collected in the television
set-top by monitoring the channel to which the subscriber is
tuned to. This information is subsequently transmitted to
10   the head end to provide the actual viewership information as
opposed to the expected viewership. The data channel as
specified in the Data Over Cable System Interface
Specification (DOCSIS) can be used to transmit the
viewership information to the head-end or other location.

15   In another implementation, the AMS 100 is modified to
add an ability to capture particular ads (as described
below) and to store those ads for later display. Generally,
the ability to access advertisement databases is external to
the AMS 100 and is maintained by the advertisers themselves.
20   These databases contain advertisement characterization
vectors in standardized formats. However, in this
implementation, an ability to extract avail information from
MPEG video streams to determine avail parameters is added
within the AMS 100. In this implementation, the ability to
25   deliver ads in concatenated insertion systems and the
ability to capture ads in real time at insertion modules is
also included within the AMS 100. As an example, Coke may
play a national ad on TNT and then want to repeat it in
regional or local markets. In accordance with this
30   implementation, there is no need to capture the ad and store
it on a server. Instead, the ad may be captured "on the
fly" and be added in the desired program streams.

          In another implementation, the ability to selectively
capture ads in each server, based on node/subscriber
35   demographics or other Artificial Intelligence (AI) criteria

is also added. In this implementation, the ads are automatically captured at a local server, and are presented for subsequent auctioning. One set of criteria that can be used is the correlation between the ad (based on an ad

5   characterization vector, possibly transmitted with the advertisement) and the node/subscriber demographics. As an example, the ads that are targeted for high income households may be stored on local servers located in head-ends serving high income areas.

10   The ability to receive an "ad channel" which serves as the source for ad segments is also added. The "ad channel" would be implemented as a channel on a common cable satellite which provides cable programming and would contain a continuous or quasi-continuous stream of ads.

15   One approach to specify a rate for the advertisement that is not constant over the duration of the ad is to specify the rate in terms of the number of Multi Program Transport Stream (MPTS) packets per program transport stream packet. This can be done on a time linear scale holding the

20 last value until the next value arrives.

The principles of the present invention are flexible and permit the use of additional features, such as the ability to divide up "local ads" into nodes, and the ability to handle non-constant bandwidth advertisement profiles.

25 These features allow for the "activation" of regional and national versions of multiple ads in a downstream inserter that modifies the PSI to insert the desired ad. In this implementation, the profiles that are supported include pre-defined avail profiles, with the bandwidth varying during

30 the course of the avail. The bandwidth generally does not exceed a pre-determined limit.

The system as described in various ways may be represented and modeled using primarily the Unified Modified Language (UML) which is well known to those skilled in the

art. The UML and other diagrams together with the
accompanying text can be used to implement the Advertisement
Management System (AMS) 100.

5   Although the embodiments described herein enable one of
ordinary skill in the art to implement (i.e. build) the AMS
100, it in no way restricts the method of implementation,
the AMS 100 being capable of being implemented on a variety
of hardware/software platforms with a variety of development
languages, databases, communication protocols and frameworks
10   as will be evident to those skilled in the art.
Furthermore, the design represents only one set of business
objects (classes) which can be coordinated to carry out the
functionality and requirements of the AMS 100. Other
designs comprising other sets of business classes and their
15   coordinations could be constructed that also represent and
conform to the requirements of the AMS 100 as will be
evident to those skilled in the art.

      Although this invention has been illustrated by
reference to specific embodiments, it will be apparent to
20   those skilled in the art that various changes and
modifications may be made, which clearly fall within the
scope of the invention. The invention is intended to be
protected broadly within the spirit and scope of the
appended claims.

25

Claims

What is claimed is:

5   1.   An advertisement management system for managing

insertion of advertisements in video streams, the system

comprising:

an avail opportunities module for recognizing one or

more opportunities within the video streams available for

10   advertisements;

an ad characterization module for characterizing the

advertisements; and

a correlation module for determining a match between an

avail and an advertisement, wherein the match is determined

15   by utilizing available subscriber data.

2.   The system of claim 1, wherein the avail

opportunities module further comprises an avail

characterization submodule that lists and organizes the

20   avails.

3.   The system of claim 2, wherein the avail

characterization submodule is configured to receive data

from one or more content related databases.

25

4.   The system of claim 2, wherein the avail characterization submodule has an interface that permits entry of data related to avails by operators or video programming managers.

5

5.   The system of claim 4, wherein the data by operators or video programming managers is used to form one or more avail characterization vectors.

10   6.   The system of claim 4, wherein the data is entered in a plurality of categories based on demographics factors, socio-economic factors or consumption factors.

7.   The system of claim 1, wherein the ad
15   characterization module comprises an advertiser interface that permits entry of advertisement related data.

8.   The system of claim 7, wherein the advertiser interface is based on a graphical user inteface (GUI).

20

9.   The system of claim 8, wherein the advertisement related data is entered manually by advertisers and other sources.

10. The system of claim 8, wherein the advertisement related data is imported from a file.

11. The system of claim 7, wherein the advertisement
5 related data is used to characterize the advertisements.

12. The system of claim 7, wherein the data entered by advertisers is used to form one or more ad characterization vectors.

10

13. The system of claim 7, wherein the data entered by advertisers is categorized in a plurality of categories based on demographics factors, socio-economic factors or consumption factors.

15

14. The system of claim 13, wherein a deterministic value is assigned to each category.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein a probabilistic
20 distribution is determined for each category.

16. The system of claim 1, further comprising a subscriber characterization module for characterizing one or more subscribers.

17.   The system of claim 16, wherein the subscriber characterization module comprises a subscriber demographics interface that permits entry of demographic and product

5   preference data.

18.   The system of claim 17, wherein the demographic or product preference data is entered manually by one or more sources.

10

19.   The system of claim 17, wherein the data is imported from a file.

20.   The system of claim 17, wherein the data is

15   entered in a plurality of categories including household income, household size, median household age, and ethnic group.

21.   The system of claim 16, wherein the subscriber

20   characterization module comprises a node demographics interface that permits the entry of data related to a node.

22.   The system of claim 21, wherein the node related data is entered manually by one or more sources.

23. The system of claim 21, wherein the node related data is imported from a file.

5   24. The system of claim 21, wherein the node related data is entered into a plurality of categories including, household incomes, household size, median household age, and ethnic group.

10   25. The system of claim 1, wherein the correlation module produces a demographic correlation.

26. The system of claim 1, wherein the correlation module correlates the ad characterization information with
15   the avail opportunities information to produce an avail correlation.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the avail correlation is produced by multiplying corresponding
20   elements of the ad characterization information and avail opportunities information, and summing the result.

28. The system of claim 1, wherein the correlation module further generates an impact value based on the number of subscribers and an average correlation.

5　　29. The system of claim 1, wherein the correlation module is a secured system configured to protect subscriber privacy.

30. The system of claim 1, further comprising an avail

10　sales/auctioning module for selling or auctioning the avails.

31. The system of claim 30, wherein the avail sales/auctioning module utilizes the information from the

15　avail opportunities module and the ad characterization module to sell the avails to one or more advertisers.

32. The system of claim 30, where the avail/sales auctioning module utilizes the results of correlation to

20　sell the avails to one or more advertisers.

33. The system of claim 30, wherein the avail sales/auctioning module further sets the prices of the avails based on the correlation results.

34.   The system of claim 30, wherein the avails are
sold via the Internet.

5   35.   The system of claim 30, wherein the avails are
auctioned to the highest bidder.

36.   The system of claim 35, wherein the avails are
auctioned via the Internet.

10

37.   The system of claim 35, wherein an acceptance is
transmitted when a bid is accepted.

38.   The system of claim 1, further comprising a
15 billing module for charging advertisers for the
advertisements and for accepting payments from the
advertisers.

39.   The system of claim 1, further comprising:

20   an ad manager for receiving one or more advertisements
from one or more sources and for managing the ad insertion
process;

a program stream source for transmitting one or more
program streams; and

a multiplexer for multiplexing the program streams and the advertisements based on insertion instructions received from the ad manager.

5   40.   An apparatus for inserting advertisements in video streams, the apparatus comprising:

an ad manager for receiving one or more advertisements from one or more sources and for managing the ad insertion process;

10   a program stream source for transmitting one or more program streams; and

a multiplexer for multiplexing the program streams and the advertisements based on insertion instructions received from the ad manager.

15

41.   The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the ad manager is coupled directly or indirectly to one or more advertisement databases.

20   42.   The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the advertisement databases are local databases.

43.   The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the advertisement databases are network-based databases.

44. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the program stream source is configured to receive the program streams from a plurality of sources, and to forward the program

5   streams to the multiplexer.

45. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the multiplexer receives the advertisements in a compressed form.

10   46. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the multiplexer receives the advertisements in an analog form.

47. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the multiplexer multiplexes the program streams and the advertisements in

15   real-time.

48. The apparatus of claim 40, further comprising storage means for storing the advertisements until the insertion time.

20

49. The apparatus of claim 40, further comprising a synchronization manager for generating a synchronization signal.

50. The apparatus of claim 49, wherein the synchronization signal controls the timing of the ad insertion process.

5   51. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the advertisement insertion apparatus is deployed in a server-based technology.

52. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the
10 advertisement insertion apparatus is deployed via software means.

53. A method for managing advertisements in a video environment, the method comprising:

15   recognizing one or more advertisement opportunities or avails in one or more program streams;

determining one or more characteristics of a subscriber;

determining one or more characteristics of the
20 advertisement; and

selecting one or more advertisements for each avail by correlating the advertising characteristics with the subscriber characteristics or with the avail opportunities.

54. The method of claim 53, further comprising determining whether the selected advertisement can be placed in the avail.

5   55. The method of claim 53, further comprising maintaining the subscriber privacy.

56. The method of claim 53, further comprising multiplexing the selected advertisement with the program

10   stream having the avail.

57. The method of claim 56, further comprising transmitting the multiplexed stream to the subscribers.

15   58. The method of claim 56, wherein the selected advertisement and the program stream are statistically multiplexed in real time.

59. The method of claim 53, wherein the selected

20   advertisement is stored in a storage means and is inserted in the program stream at a pre-determined time.

60. The method of claim 53, further comprising setting prices for the advertisements based on the correlation results.

5   61. The method of claim 53, wherein the recognizing includes characterizing the avails.

62. The method of claim 61, wherein the characterizing the avails includes retrieving avail related data from one 10 or more databases.

63. The method of claim 61, wherein the characterizing the avails includes forming one or more avail characterization vectors based on one or more heuristic 15 rules.

64. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining one or more characteristics of a subscriber include generating one or more subscriber characterization vectors 20 based on one or more heuristic rules.

65. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining one or more characteristics of a subscriber include characterizing subscribers based on publicly available data.

66. The method of claim 65, wherein the publicly available data includes real estate records and tax assessment records.

5

67. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining one or more characteristics of a subscriber include characterizing subscribers based on privately amassed data.

10   68. The method of claim 67, wherein the private data includes specific viewing habits or purchase records of the subscriber.

69. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining

15 one or more characteristics of a subscriber include characterizing a group of subscribers.

70. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining one or more characteristics of the advertisement include

20 receiving information about advertisements from one or more sources including advertisers.

71. The method of claim 53, wherein the determining one or more characteristics of the advertisement include

characterizing advertisements in a plurality of categories

including target market demographics, required ad bandwidth,

and ad duration.

5   72.   The method of claim 71, further comprising

comparing the required ad bandwidth to the bandwidth of the

actual avail to determine if the advertisement can be placed

in the avail.

10   73.   The method of claim 71, further comprising

assigning weights to each of the categories.

        74.   The method of claim 71, further comprising

generating one or more advertising vectors based on the

15 assigned weights.

        75.   The method of claim 53, wherein the selecting

includes generating a demographic correlation by correlating

the subscriber characteristics with the advertisement

20 characteristics.

        76.   The method of claim 53, wherein the selecting

includes correlating the advertisement characteristics with

the avail characteristics to generate an avail correlation.

77.   The method of claim 53, further comprising dynamic
linking the selected advertisement with the program stream
having the avail.

5

78.   The method of claim 53, further comprising selling
the avails based on correlation results.

79.   The method of claim 78, wherein the avails are
10   sold via an auction to the highest bidders.

80.   The method of claim 78, wherein the avails are
sold via the Internet.

15   81.   The method of claim 53, wherein the subscriber is
an individual.

82.   The method of claim 53, wherein the subscriber is
a household.

20

83.   The method of claim 53, wherein the subscriber is
a group of individuals.

84. The method of claim 53, wherein the subscriber is a group of households.

85. The method of claim 53, wherein the subscriber characteristics are based on real-time Nielsen ratings.

86. The method of claim 53, further comprising inserting the selected advertisements in the program streams to generate one or more multiplexed digital video streams.

87. The method of claim 86, wherein the advertisements are inserted into program streams in a synchronized manner.

88. The method of claim 87, wherein multiple program streams are interrupted simultaneously for the insertion of the advertisements.

89. The method of claim 87, wherein the multiple program streams are interrupted based on a sync signal.

90. The method of claim 87, wherein each advertisement inserted has an equal bandwidth, and before the insertion, each program stream is set to a bit rate appropriate for the advertisement.

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91. The method of claim 90, wherein the bandwidth of the program stream is adapted at the time of insertion.

5   92. The method of claim 87, wherein the advertisements are compressed to a level identical to the program streams before the insertion.

93. The method of claim 86, wherein the advertisements
10   are inserted into the program in a plesiochronous manner.

94. The method of claim 93, wherein the advertisements are inserted into a plurality of program streams within a predetermined time period.

15

95. The method of claim 93, wherein each program stream has a bandwidth of similar size.

96. The method of claim 93, wherein each program
20   stream is changed to a constant bit rate before the actual insertion of the advertisements.

97. The method of claim 93, wherein the advertisements are compressed to the bandwidth of the program stream where the advertisements will be inserted.

5   98. The method of claim 86, wherein the advertisements are inserted in an asynchronous manner.

99. A method for inserting advertisements in video streams, the method comprising:

10   receiving one or more program streams, wherein the program streams relate to the actual programming contents;

selecting one or more advertisements to be inserted in the program streams;

multiplexing the program streams and the advertisements

15   to generate one or more multiplexed video streams.

100. The method of claim 99, wherein the advertisements are inserted into program streams in a synchronized manner.

20   101. The method of claim 100, wherein multiple program streams are interrupted simultaneously for the insertion of the advertisements.

102. The method of claim 101, wherein the multiple program streams are interrupted based on a sync signal.

103. The method of claim 100, wherein each
5   advertisement inserted has an equal bandwidth, and before the insertion, each program stream is set to a bit rate appropriate for the advertisement.

104. The method of claim 103, wherein the bandwidth of
10   the program stream is adapted at the time of insertion.

105. The method of claim 100, wherein the advertisements are compressed to a level identical to the program streams before the insertion.

15

106. The method of claim 99, wherein the advertisements are inserted into the program in a plesiochronous manner.

107. The method of claim 106, wherein the
20   advertisements are inserted into a plurality of program streams within a predetermined time period.

108. The method of claim 106, wherein each program stream has a bandwidth of similar size.

109. The method of claim 106, wherein each program stream is changed to a constant bit rate before the actual insertion of the advertisements.

5

110. The method of claim 106, wherein the advertisements are compressed to a bandwidth equal to a bandwidth of the program stream where the advertisements will be inserted.

10

111. The method of claim 99, wherein the advertisements are inserted in an asynchronous manner.

112. The method of claim 111, wherein the
15   advertisements are inserted according to pre-determined parameters.

113. The method of claim 112, wherein the pre-determined parameters are advertising opportunities selected
20 by producers of the program streams.

114. The method of claim 112, wherein the pre-determined parameters are advertising opportunities selected by cable operators.

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115. The method of claim 99, wherein the advertisements are dynamically linked to one or more program streams.

5   116. The method of claim 115, wherein the advertisements are dynamically linked to the program streams by re-addressing one or more identifiers associated with the advertisements.

10   117. The method of claim 115, wherein the dynamic linking occurs at the commencement of the advertisement.

118. The method of claim 115, wherein the dynamic linking occurs after all the contents of the advertisement 15   have been received.

119. The method of claim 99, wherein the advertisements are transported on a dedicated channel.

20   120. The method of claim 119, wherein the dedicated channel is contained within the one or more multiplexed video streams.

121. The method of claim 119, wherein the dedicated channel is located outside the one or more multiplexed video streams.

5   122. The method of claim 119, wherein the advertisements are retrieved from the dedicated channel and are displayed to the viewer in real-time.

123. The method of claim 119, wherein the dedicated

10   channel is an in-band channel having the same frequency as the actual program stream.

124. The method of claim 119, wherein the dedicated channel is an out-of-band channel having a different

15   frequency than the actual program stream.

125. The method of claim 124, wherein the actual program streams are transmitted in a first channel with a 1030 to 71030 MHz range, and the advertisements are

20   transmitted in a second channel in the same frequency range.
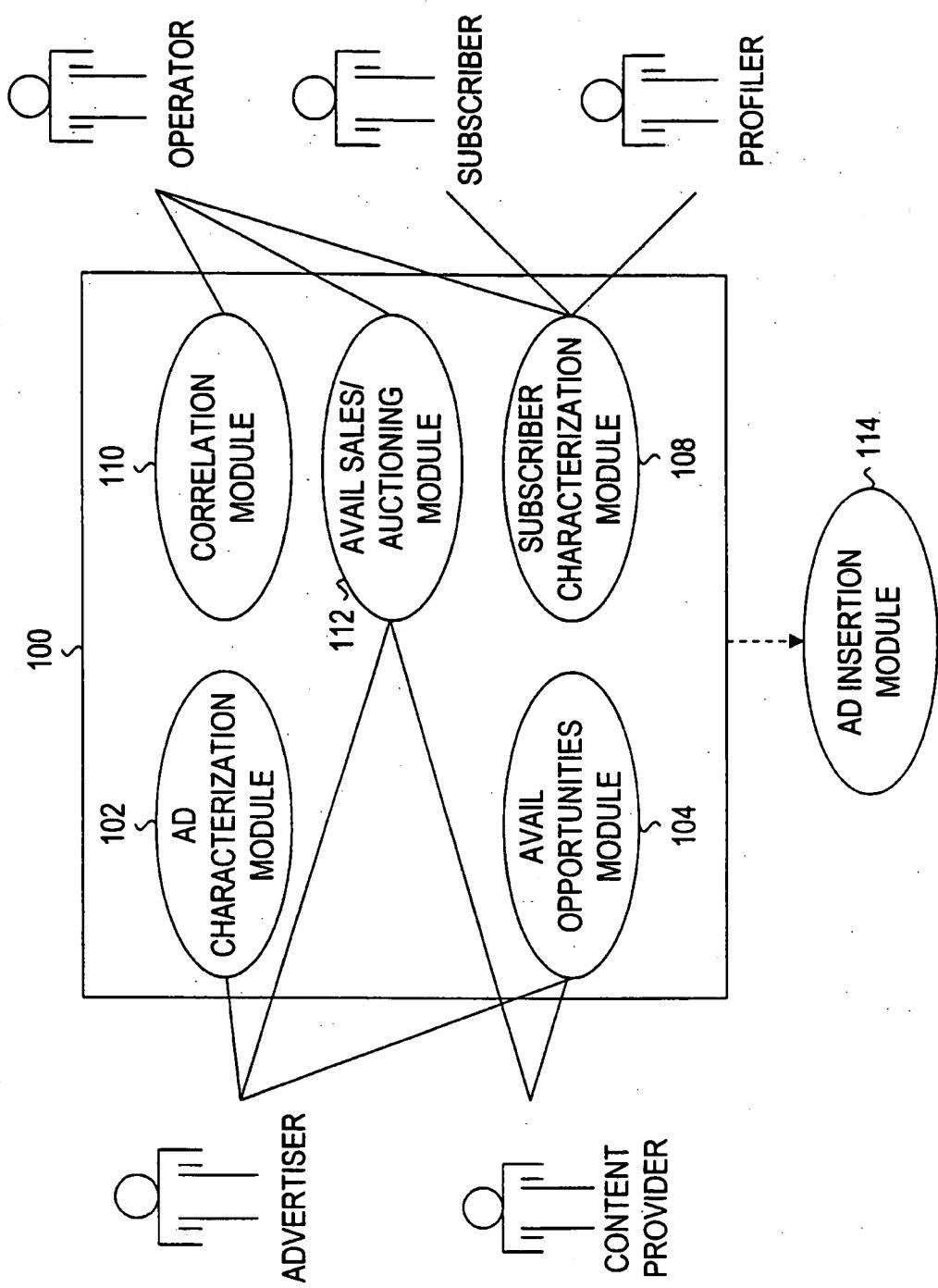
FIG. 1

ZIP CODE	MEDIAN HOME PRICE
18901	$175,000
18910	$64,000
18911	$80,000
18912	$110,000
⋮	⋮
18920	$225,000

FIG. 2A

STARTER HOME PRICES

ZIP CODE	TOWN	AVERAGE SALE
02108	BOSTON	$204,889
02158	NEWTON, MA	325,378
10011	NEW YORK	422,500
10128	NEW YORK	387,800
19044	HORSHAM, PA	151,411
19106	PHILADELPHIA	184,562
20007	WASHINGTON, D.C.	337,402
22301	ALEXANDRIA, VA	263,323
27613	RALEIGH, NC	190,863
30033	DECATUR, GA	169,271
30342	ATLANTA	318,602
33186	MIAMI	121,568
33647	TAMPA, FL	186,794
37221	BELLEVUE, TN	155,399
48335	FARMINGTON, MI	208,558
60611	CHICAGO	234,124
60614	CHICAGO	327,601
80015	AURORA, CO	176,517
85044	PHOENIX	205,099
90278	REDONDO BEACH, CA	329,251
91306	WINNETKA, CA	164,000
92117	SAN DIEGO	201,620
94066	SAN BRUNO, CA	255,110
94131	SAN FRANCISCO	418,731
98033	KIRKLAND, WA	260,334

FIG. 2B

SUBSCRIBER	ADDRESS	TAX PARCEL #	ASSESED VALUE
JOHN & MARY JONES	12 EUCLID	96-2-112	$115,000
JANE DOE	1550 12TH	96-3-115	$350,000
...			
TOM & SHEENA SMITH	1512 20TH	96-3-130	$64,000

FIG. 3
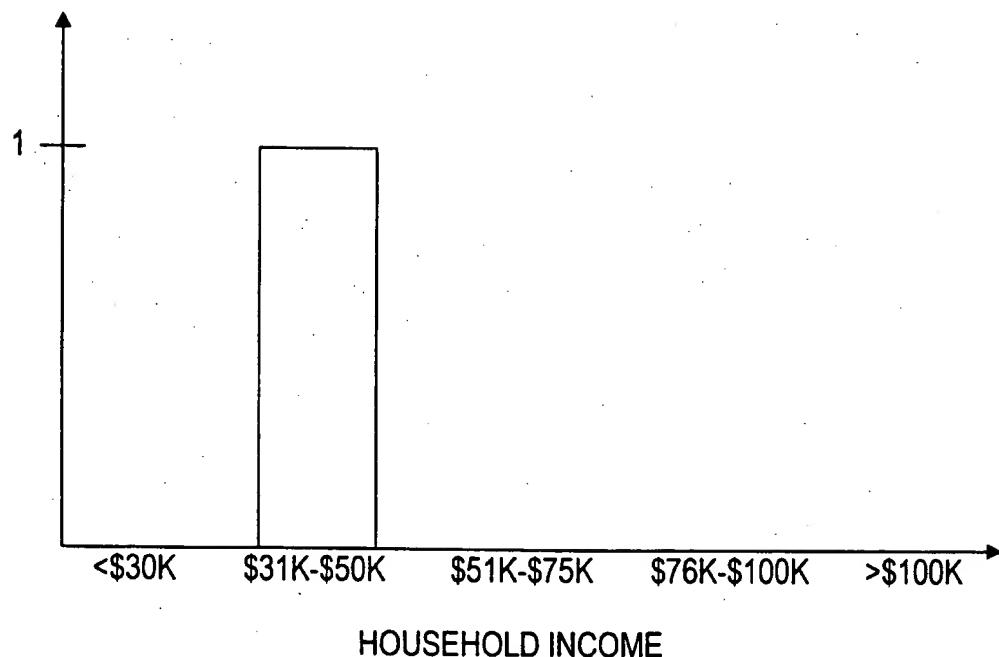
FIG. 4A

FIG. 4B

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD AGE

FIG. 4C

ETHNIC GROUP

FIG. 4D

AD CHARACTERIZATION
VECTOR
(E.G. HOUSEHOLD INCOME)

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

•

SUBSCRIBER/NODE CHARACTERIZATION
VECTOR
(E.G. HOUSEHOLD INCOME)

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0.2 \\ 0.2 \\ 0.4 \\ 0.1 \\ 0.1 \end{bmatrix}$$

=

DEMOGRAPHIC
CORRELATION

0.4
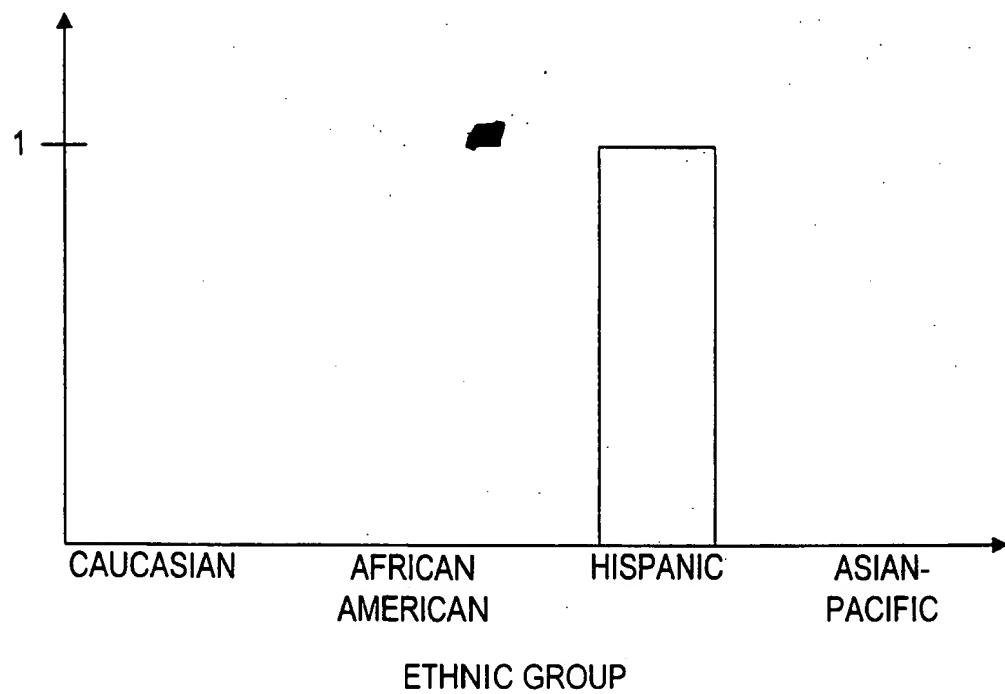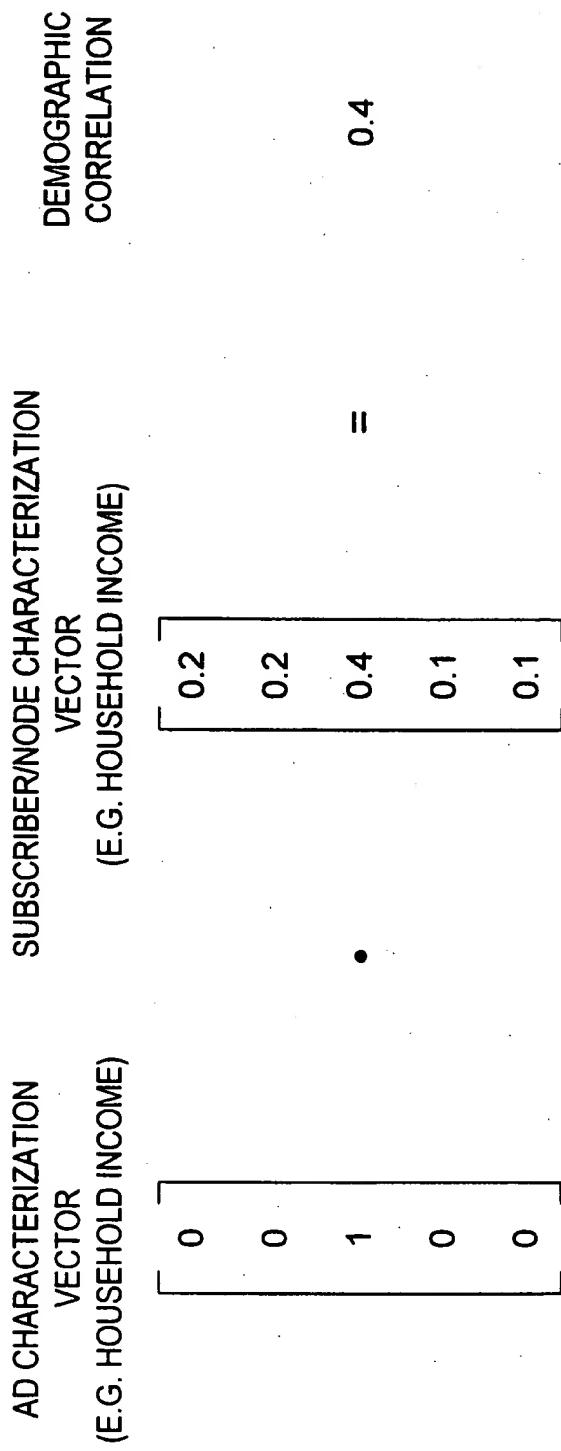
FIG. 5

ADVERTISEMENT: VOLKSWAGEN, DRIVERS WANTED

DURATION: 30s

MINIMUM BW: 4Mb/s

AVAIL	DATE/TIME	PROGRAM	CORRELATION
#23	3MARCH00 : 15:28	DAYS OF OUR LIVES	0.2
#72	3MARCH00 : 20:15	BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER	0.7
#51	3MARCH00 : 21:00	60 MINUTES	0.6

FIG. 6

ADVERTISEMENT: VOLKSWAGEN, DRIVERS WANTED

DURATION: 30s

MINIMUM BW: 4Mb/s

CORRELATION W/ NODE/SUBSCRIBER

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░░	0.6
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░	0.7
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD AGE	▨▨▨▨░░░░░░	0.4
ETHNIC GROUP	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░	0.7
AVERAGE DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATION	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░░	0.6
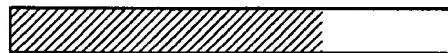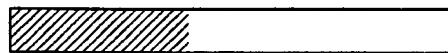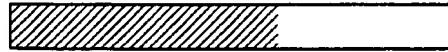
CORRELATION W/ AVAIL

VIEWER'S INCOME	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░	0.8
VIEWER'S HOUSEHOLD SIZE	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░░	0.6
VIEWER'S AGE	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨	0.9
VIEWER'S ETHNIC GROUP	▨▨▨▨▨░░░░░	0.5
AVERAGE AVAIL CORRELATION	▨▨▨▨▨▨▨░░░	0.7

EXPECTED VIEWERSHIP: 2E6

ACTUAL VIEWERSHIP: 1.8E6

FIG. 7

AVAIL#	DATE/TIME	PROGRAM	AD#	AD TITLE	CORRELATION	VIEWERSHIP	IMPACT	PRICE
#23	3MARCH00:15:28	DAYS OF OUR LIVES	AD757	IVORY SOAP	0.6	3.2E6	1.92E6	$72,000
#75	3MARCH00:18:10	6:00 NEWS	AD3021	FORD	0.7	1.8E6	1.26E6	$42,000
#51	3MARCH00:21:00	60 MINUTES	AD312	VOLKSWAGEN: DRIVERS WANTED	0.8	2.5E6	2E6	$100,000

FIG. 8
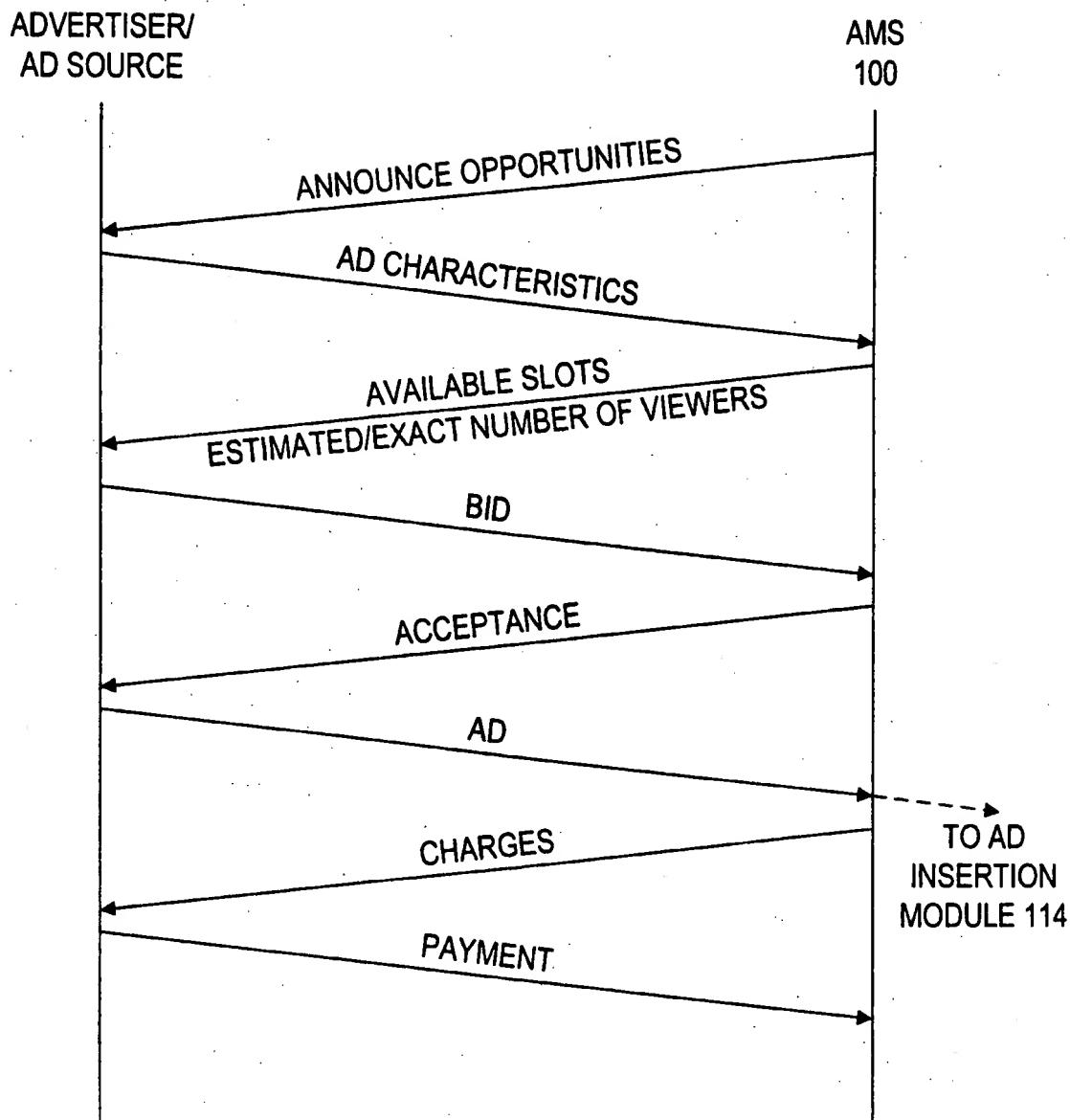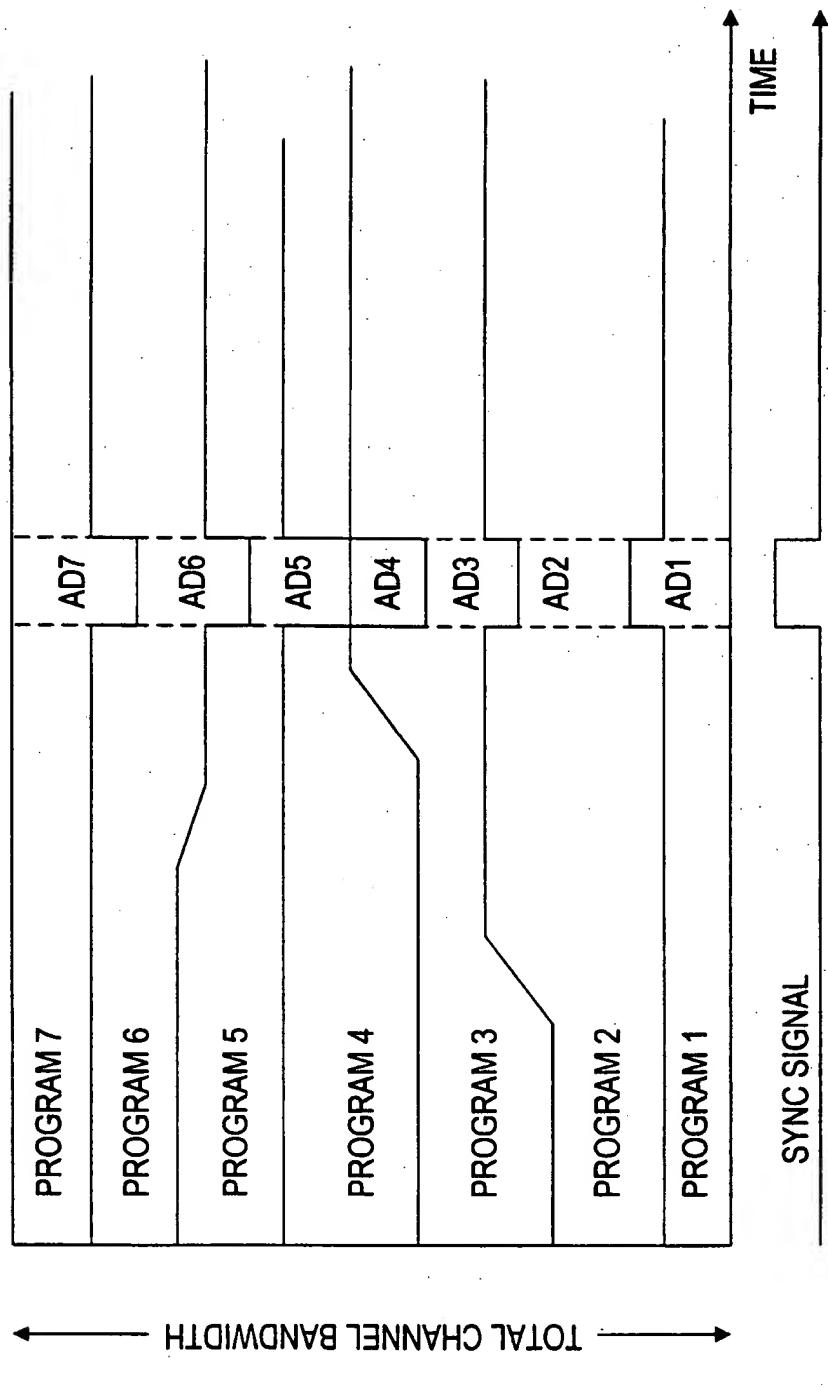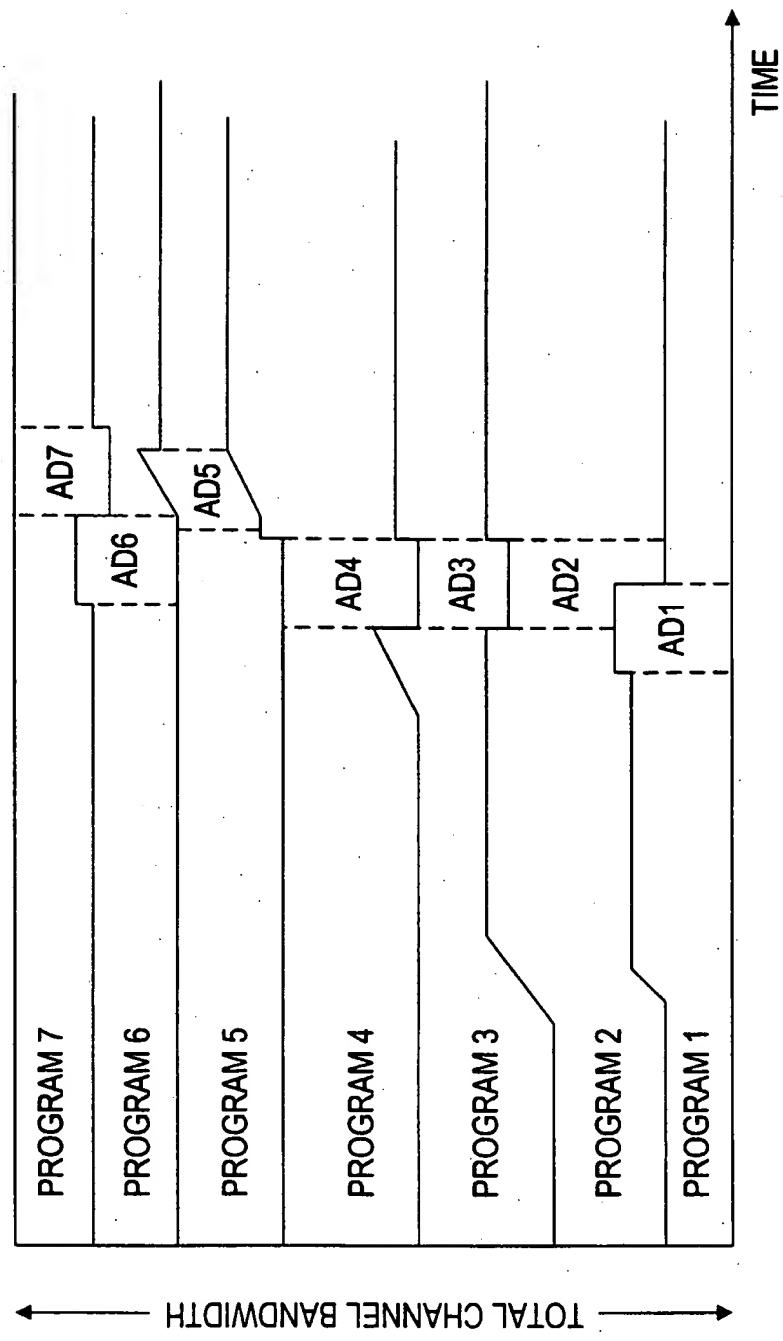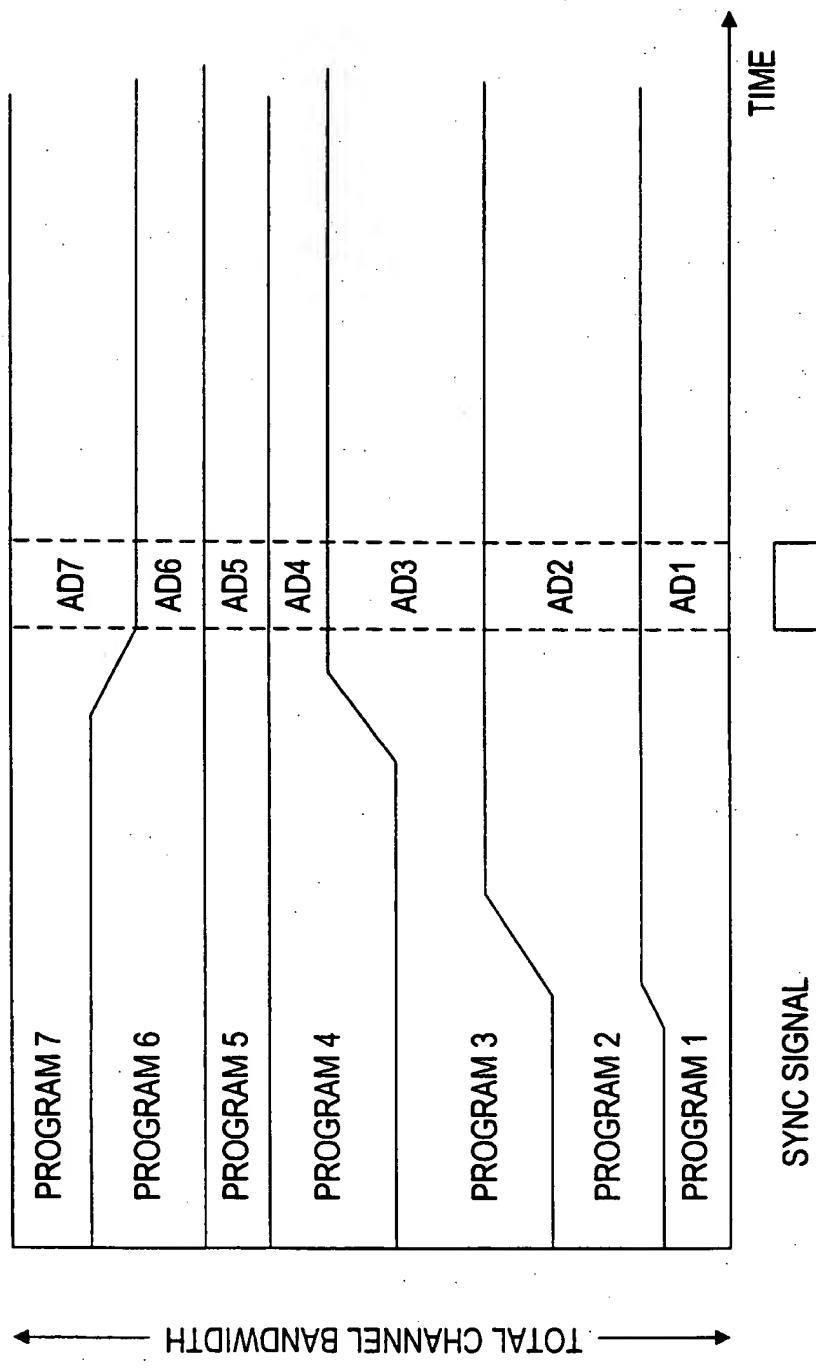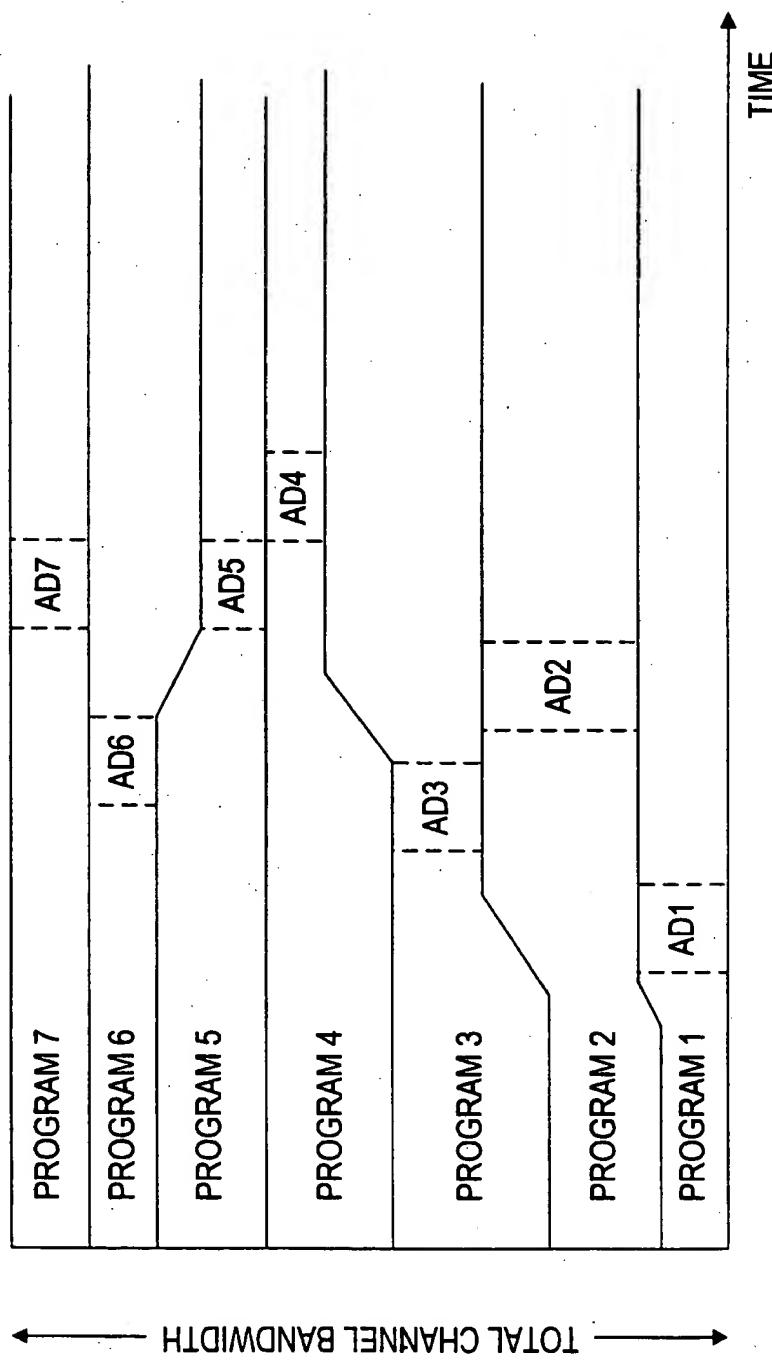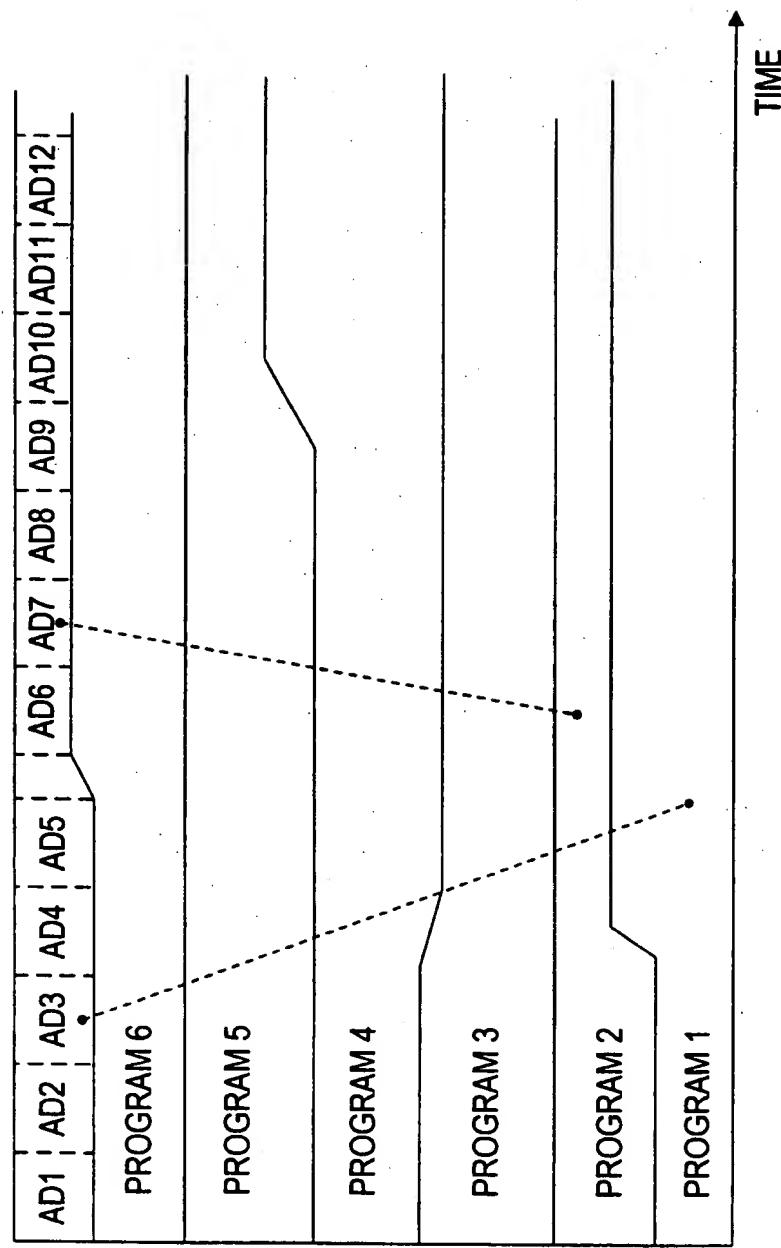
ADVERTISER/
AD SOURCE

AMS
100

ANNOUNCE OPPORTUNITIES

AD CHARACTERISTICS

AVAILABLE SLOTS
ESTIMATED/EXACT NUMBER OF VIEWERS

BID

ACCEPTANCE

AD

TO AD
INSERTION
MODULE 114

CHARGES

PAYMENT

FIG. 9

FIG. 10

FIG. 11

FIG. 12

15/16

FIG. 13

FIG. 14

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(7) :H04N 7/10
US CL :709/217, 348/9
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 709/217-217, 348/2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 10, 12, 13.

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,864,823 A (LEVITAN) 26 JANUARY 1999, FIGURES 1, 2, AND 5	1-125
A,P	US 6,006,257 A (SLEZAK) 21 DECEMBER 1999, FIGURES 1-11.	1-125
A,P	US 6,009,410 A (LEMOLE ET AL.) 28 DECEMBER 1999, FIGURES 1-4.	1-125

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	
"E" earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
05 JULY 2000	**1 5 AUG 2000**
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231	Authorized officer NATHAN J. FLYNN
Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Telephone No. (703) 308-0000

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998)*